A statement regarding Docket # P-15056—Ashokan Pumped Storage plan.

As a resident of Woodland Valley, one of the locations being proposed by Premium Energy Holdings of California as a site for a large reservoir, for use in pumped storage and generation of electricity*,* I vigorously object to the proposal and request that the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission deny Premium Energy Holding’s application for a preliminary permit.

In addition to dispossessing hundreds of homeowners, this reservoir would inundate and flood the valley’s current water way--Woodland Brook, a trout stream and tributary to the Esopus Creek. It is a special and beautiful stream.

John Burroughs, the 19th century naturalist and author, wrote of discovering the brook for the first time:

But the prettiest thing was the stream soliloquizing in such musical tones there amid the moss-covered rocks and boulders. How clean it looked, what purity! Civilization corrupts the streams as it corrupts the Indian; only in such remote woods can you now see a brook in all its original freshness and beauty. Only the sea and the mountain forest brook are pure; all between is contaminated more or less by the work of man. An ideal trout brook was this, now hurrying, now loitering, now deepening around a great boulder, now gliding evenly over a pavement of green-gray stone and pebbles; no sediment or stain of any kind, but white and sparkling as snow-water, and nearly as cool. Indeed, the water of all this Catskill region is the best in the world. For the first few days, one feels as if he could almost live on the water alone.; he cannot drink enough of it. In this particular it is indeed the good bible land, “a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills.”

The brook is the particular reason many of the valley’s homeowners chose to live there. And when it comes their time to die, rather than be consigned to a cemetery, their emotional attachment is such that they prefer to have their ashes joined with the brook.

I make no apology for waxing poetic about my boyhood stream. It would be a sin, a travesty, to permit an energy company to decimate Woodland Brook. What follows will give you a further idea of how I feel on the subject.

Thank you.

J. Michael O’Neil

WOODLAND BROOK

Thoughts of the brook consume me.

There’s early spring, when the water runs

Fast and blue and the shadblow blooms pure white

All along the valley corridor.

My father directs me to use a quill Gordon.

Iron Fraudator hatches while the last

Thin snow falls.

Grandpa was right.

Life is not all skittles and beer.

Even on a bright Memorial Day,

You can find evidence of Winter’s

Harsh directive.

The stench of rotting flesh hits us

Like a wall, as we crash through

Sinewy brush, lugging heavy buckets

Of stocking trout.

The doe’s body was hidden in deep water,

Until this sudden dry spell.

Lately she has become the uncontested property,

Of recalcitrant valley dogs and buzzflies.

In summer the brook dwindles to a crystalline trickle,

Under a demanding sun, grasshoppers bask

In the hot dust and fiddle beneath the black-eyed suzies.

Cautious trout maintain themselves in the shade

Of willows and smooth children’s jumping rocks

They wait for nighttime when they will fill with

Brash courage and feed in a frenzy on top.

Take your rod and visit them then.

To Hell with the cocktail hour.

Cold wet autumn, when the slate drakes hatch

Leaving their skinhusks behind like gossamer souvenirs of their

First life. As May flies, they flutter off through the rain

To begin their brief climactic last-life.

There is the Grandparent’s pool,

Where we laid my parents’ ashes,

First his in his year of death, then her’s.

Angler’s ashes in the waters they loved.

The brook holds them and venerates them,

As do we.

J. Michael O’Neil